



Lower Mystic Regional Working Group

April 11th, 2016
Mass DOT Offices, 10 Park Plaza
9:00 AM – 11:30 AM
Meeting Summary

Action Items from the meeting

- CBI will create a list with links and brief descriptions of previously completed studies and plans that are relevant to the work of the LMRWG
- The working group will provide feedback on the draft ground rules/protocols and proposed study area
- CBI will further discuss the issue of funder participation and decision-making with Secretary Pollack and her office
- MAPC will adjust the study area in response to working group feedback
- CBI will schedule the next six months of meetings (Mondays, except in May)

Notes from the meeting

Objectives:

- Share the key themes that have emerged from CBI interviews
- Discuss and confirm draft ground rules
- Gain a common understanding of the key parameters, inputs, and assumptions in the travel demand and land use models
- Confirm collective understanding of the study area
- Discuss the proposed agenda topics for upcoming meetings

Key Discussions:

Key Themes from Interviews:

Carri Hulet, CBI, presented on the major themes from CBI's interviews with working group members. She presented views from the interviewees on the objectives of the process; the content and value of the final product; process concerns; suggestions on public engagement; feedback on relevant previous and ongoing planning efforts; and initial ideas about infrastructure, policy, and Travel Demand Management (TDM) options that might be included in the alternatives.

After the presentation, a member noted that increased growth and development does not necessarily lead to increased traffic congestion (as someone else had said during the interviews) if public transit capacity grows accordingly. Another member said the group needs to think of land use planning and transportation policy as joint activities, not in silos. Others noted additional previous plans that should be considered in the process and asked that the working group be provided with brief descriptions of all related, prior plans. Following the meeting, CBI sent the presentation to the full working group.

Groundrules/Protocols:

Pat Field, CBI, distributed and reviewed the draft ground rules (see protocols on LMRWG website), created to clarify the process and procedures for the working group. He asked the group to provide feedback to CBI on the draft document. The group then discussed the protocols. Some key points of the discussion:

- There was concern that, especially as process funders, Wynn and the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) are listed as participants rather than decision-making members. The \$25 million commitment from Wynn is only available for projects that are relevant to traffic that can be reasonably attributed to Wynn, so MGC and/or Wynn would like influence over decisions that may trigger the use of these funds in Sullivan Square. CBI agreed to further discuss the issue of funder participation and decision-making with Secretary Pollack and her office.
- There was a call to allow the member entities the flexibility to determine who represents them at the table in any given meeting, while ensuring they do not exceed the limit outlined in the certificate. There was no opposition to this flexibility, but some discussion of the value of consistency, as well as clarity on who speaks for the entity.
- The protocols currently state that certain decisions “will be at the sole discretion of the Secretary of Transportation,” as MassDOT has the final determination, but it was made clear through discussion that there is room for agreement and value trading prior to that point. Also, most decisions are at the discretion of the group, which will operate by consensus. The final report will describe differences of opinions within the group if consensus is not reached.
- Boston needs to fit this plan within a larger process. The city is currently analyzing new traffic counts, soliciting community input, and determining whether the alternatives should include a tunnel or the surface plan. Through long-term planning, Boston wants to accomplish several objectives, including increasing the pedestrian and bike capacity near Sullivan Square and protecting Rutherford Corridor from regional traffic.

Modeling 201

Scott Peterson, CTPS, and Tim Reardon, MAPC, provided an orientation to the traffic demand and land use models the working group will later use to analyze the alternative scenarios (see Traffic Modeling PowerPoint on LMRWG website).

Following the presentations, the group asked questions and discussed the information. Some key points include:

- The working group will analyze a total of 12 alternatives modeling infrastructure and/or policy changes and will generate these potential alternatives through an iterative process over the next several meetings.
- Each scenario will need to be internally consistent and believable while also including aspirational goals.
- The model, as is, can differentiate traffic flow by building use, show greenhouse gas emissions, factor in vehicle ownership rates and density, separate park and ride trips by mode, and analyze actual roadway capacity (rather than using V/C ratios).
- As of now, the Green Line extension decision is not delaying CTPS's modeling work, but CTPS will need to know the future of the line by June to stay on schedule.

Study Area:

Mr. Reardon presented a revised two-tiered study area concept based on the conversation from the previous working group meeting (see study area map on LMRWG website). A smaller "Scenario Focus Area" will be the focus of land use, infrastructure, investment, and transit changes, while a larger "Impact Analysis Area" will include tabulated statistics for a broader area.

- Mr. Reardon explained that the boundaries are based on Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZ's).
- Regarding the scenario focus area, Mr. Reardon explained that the group still must determine how best to factor in future planned developments, with different projects having varying certainties and times for completion.
- Group members suggested adding some areas into the focus area, including Charlestown, due to redevelopment of public housing, and North Station, due to the bridge reconstruction, high local growth, and infrastructure development. There was also discussion of adding a large TAZ near Medford's river section and TAZs north of the orange line near 1A and Wellington Station, as the areas are in Malden and Medford. The color of the rivers needs to be adjusted.

Process Schedule:

The working group reviewed the proposed schedule for the remainder of the process. The group discussed that the project scope is 18 months beginning in March 2016. The process needs to consider the full range of ideas, including value capture, new approaches, and traditionally successful technologies.